United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serbs sign one-month cease-fire agreement in Geneva; Special Representative Akashi welcomes first step towards complete cessation of hostilities.

+ Secretary-General attends ceremony in Geneva marking first payments made by United Nations Compensation Commission; meets with Special Coordinator for occupied territories.

+ Special Envoy Brahimi arrives in Yemen at head of United Nations fact-finding mission; asks Government to help evaluate humanitarian situation; 250,000 displaced persons reported in need of relief.

+ High Commisioner for Human Rights meets with Special Rapporteur on Rwanda to discuss upcoming fact-finding and investigative mission.

+ Julius Nyerere tells World Hearings on Development that United Nations must redress North-South imbalance; development agenda should be financed by international tax.

+ Secretary-General, in report to Security Council, says success of UNASOG shows how disputes can be settled when parties cooperate fully with United Nations.

+ Subcommittee on Small Territories approves draft resolution on tackling drug problems in nine Non-Self-Governing Territories.

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Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb delegations meeting in Geneva today signed an interim agremeent for a one-month cease-fire, according to a United Nations spokesman. The parties agreed to refrain from offensive military activities for one month beginning Friday. Defensive activities by either side were not covered by the agreement.

Special Representative Yasushi Akashi, who convened the Geneva talks, described today's agreement as a modest but significant step towards a

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complete cessation of hostilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The parties agreed to resume talks under the auspices of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Sarajevo, probably late next week, the spokesman said.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today attended a ceremony in Geneva marking the first payments made by the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC) to settle claims resulting from Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990. The Commission paid more than $2.7 million to 600 individuals and families to settle claims for death and serious injuries. Some 5,000 claims of that nature have been presented to the Commission, and it is hoped that most of them will be settled this year.

The Secretary-General said the ceremony was an important milestone in the implementation of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), which established the cease-fire after the Gulf War. The international community had shown that it was standing by the victims of the Iraqi invasion, and that it was committed to international law. He called on Member States to live up to their financial responsibilities to the Commission, which has insufficient funds to meet the 5,000 claims presented.

Earlier today, the Secretary-General met with Terje Roed Larsen, who was recently appointed Special Coordinator in the occupied territories. Mr. Larsen left for the territories immediately after the meeting. He will set up headquarters in Gaza, and will serve as a focal point for United Nations economic, social and other activities. The Secretary-General also met with Special Representative Yasushi Akashi, and congratulated him on the one-month cease-fire agreement signed in Geneva today by the Bosnian Government and the Bosnian Serbs.

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Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, Head of the United Nations fact-finding mission to Yemen, arrived in that country today and appealed to all parties there to abide by the Security Council's call for an immediate cease-fire. He also expressed concern at the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in and around Aden.

Mr. Brahimi held informal talks with Foreign Minister Ahmed Basendwah, and asked the Yemeni Government to assist the United Nations agencies in Sana'a in evaluating the humanitarian situation. He was scheduled to meet with Prime Minister Mohamed Al-Attar this afternoon, and with President Ali Abdallah Saleh tomorrow.

In a related development, Serge Telle of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs will convene a meeting in Sana'a tomorrow to assess humanitarian needs in Yemen. The meeting will be attended by United Nations agencies, donor countries and Government officials. Preliminary reports indicate that there are 250,000 displaced persons eligible for assistance, and that figure is expected to rise

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The United Nations High Commisioner for Human Rights, Jose Ayala Lasso, held consultations in Geneva yesterday with the Special Rapporteur on Rwanda, Rene Degni Segui of Côte d'Ivoire. The Economic and Social Council approved the Special Rapporteur's mandate on Monday, and he is expected to leave for Rwanda on 10 June.

The High Commissioner emphasized that the Special Rapporteur had an unusually broad mandate, including fact-finding and investigation. For the first time, a rapporteur had been asked to look into the root causes of a situation and determine responsibilities for events. He pledged that he would give Mr. Degni Segui total and constant support, and said he would be in close contact with Special Representative Jacques-Roger Booh-Booh and the Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), Major-General Romeo Dallaire.

The Special Rapporteur will be accompanied on his mission by: Bacre Waly Ndiaye (Senegal), Special Rapporteur on summary and arbitrary executions; Nigel Rodley, Special Rapporteur on torture; and three staff members from the Centre for Human Rights. He will visit several locations in Rwanda, under UNAMIR protection, and will visit neighbouring countries where Rwandan refugees are located. He is expected to return to Geneva on 18 or 19 June, and to prepare a preliminary report to the Commission on Human Rights by 24 June.

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A United Nations agenda for development must recognize the North-South divide, and redress its imbalance, Julius Nyerere told the World Hearings on Development yesterday. The former President of Tanzania and current Chairman of the South Centre said that resources for development should be considered a right, and that the agenda should be financed by the international equivalent of national taxation.

Mr. Nyerere said an action-oriented agenda for development must bring the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank under United Nations control. If those powerful institutions continued to adhere to the principle of "one dollar, one vote", developing countries would not be able to put people first. He called for more democracy in the United Nations, and for a reconsideration of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. It was absurd for the Organization to urge democracy on Member States while abdicating its responsibilities in favour of the Powers of the North, which exercised effective control over international finance and trade institutions, he concluded.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said that the achievements of the United Nations Aouzou Strip Observer Group (UNASOG) show how successfully disputes can be settled when parties cooperate fully with the Organization.

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UNASOG was set up by Security Council resolution 915 (1994) to oversee Libya's withdrawal from the Aouzou Strip last month. The Strip had been the subject of a territorial dispute between Libya and Chad, but the two countries submitted the matter to the International Court of Justice.

In a report to the Security Council dated 6 June, the Secretary-General said UNASOG had successfully completed the task assigned to it and might now be considered terminated. He thanked the Governments of Libya and Chad for cooperating with the Observer Group.

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The Subcommittee on Small Territories, Petitions, Information and Assistance yesterday recommended that the Special Committee on Decolonization call on administering Powers to counter problems related to drug trafficking in Non-Self-Governing Territories. It made that recommendation in a draft resolution on nine Territories -- American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands -- approved without a vote at the conclusion of its 1994 session.

The consolidated draft resolution has a section on general aspects of the administration of the Territories and another on specific conditions in them. On the specific conditions in the British Virgin Islands and Montserrat, the Special Committee would urge their administering Power to continue its assistance to prevent drug trafficking and money laundering. It would call on the administering Power of the Cayman Islands to take measures, in cooperation with the territorial Government, to counter problems relating to money laundering, smuggling of funds and other crimes, as well as drug trafficking.

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